

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 13 have been amended to clarify the invention over the prior art. Claims 2 and 15 have been rewritten in independent form. Claims 3-12, 14 and 16-19 have been amended to conform to U.S. practice. New claims 20-29, which correspond to claims 2-6 and 15-19, have been added to further scope claim 1 or claim 13, as amended. No new matter has been entered.

The indicated allowability of claims 2-6 and 15-19 is noted, with thanks.

Turning to the rejection of claims 1 and 7-12 under 35 USC §103 as obvious over Applicant's admitted prior art (APA) in view of Japanese Patent Publication No. 09-097768 to Ide, claim 1 has been amended to require the feature that the gas feeder extends partially around the circumference of the wafer boat. Neither Applicant's APA nor Ide discloses this feature or the advantages resulting therefrom in terms of usable work space. Applicant's APA teaches a tube that extends only in a vertical direction with respect to the wafer boat. Thus, Applicant's APA cannot achieve or render obvious claim 1. Furthermore, Ide does not supply the missing teaching. Ide teaches a conical tube that again is placed beside the wafer boat (FIGS. 1 and 2). Nowhere does Ide show a gas feeder that partially extends around the circumference of the wafer boat. Thus, no combination of Applicant's APA can achieve or render obvious claim 1, nor any claims dependent therefrom.

Turning to the rejection of claims 13 and 14 as obvious over Applicant's APA in view of Ide in further view of Hwang (U.S. Patent No. 5,441,570), claim 13 has been amended to include the feature that the gas feeder extends partially around the circumference of the retainer. The deficiencies of Applicant's APA and Ide are discussed above. Hwang does not supply the missing teaching. Hwang also teaches a tubular gas feeder tube (FIG. 1). Nowhere does Hwang

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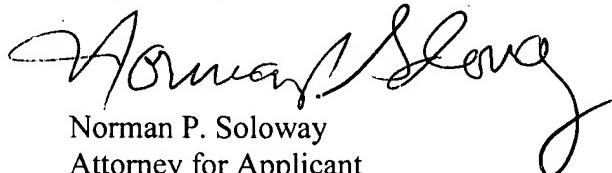
teach or suggest a tube that partially extends around the circumference of a retainer. Thus, no combination of Applicant's APA, Ide and Hwang can achieve or render obvious claim 13 or dependent claim 14.

Having dealt with all the objections raised by the Examiner, the Application is believed to be in order for allowance. Early and favorable action are respectfully requested.

The Examiner indicated in both the Office Action mailed August 28, 2002 and the Office Action mailed August 28, 2003 that Information Disclosure Statements were enclosed. However, no initialed copies of either Form PTO-1449 have been returned to Applicants. Accordingly, Applicant submits an additional copy of each of the Information Disclosure Citations as originally filed with the Patent Office, together with a copy of each postcard showing receipt thereof by the Patent Office, for acknowledgment by the Examiner. Since both Information Disclosure Citations were timely filed, no fee is believed necessary.

A credit card payment authorization Form PTO-2038 authorizing a charge in the amount of \$162.00 in payment of the added claim fees accompanies this Amendment. In the event there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge them (or credit any overpayment) to our Deposit Account Number 08-1391.

Respectfully submitted,



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